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ABSTRACT

Gibbons et al. (1980) reported 14 principles in "teaching for self-education." Four of these principles illustrate some of the challenges involved in applying the principles to classroom learning: (1) in self-education, the locus of control is in the self-educator, whereas, in formal education, the locus of control is in institutions, their representatives, or their prescription; (2) self-education is usually a concentrated effort in one field rather than a general study of many; (3) self-education is usually applied education--learning for immediate application to a task, and from the practical experience in executing it; and (4) self-educators are self-motivated, that is, they are committed to achievement in the field of their choice, even when faced with difficulties. Teaching for each of these principles and the other 10 involves separating out a strategy for applying each of them and then creating tactics for classroom use. (The principles and application strategies were examined in a workshop following the presentation of this paper. Includes 22 references.) (KC)

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SELECTED PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING SELF-DIRECTION IN ADULT LEARNING

Huey B. Long *

Much has been written on the topic of self-direction in learning since Allen Tough wrote his dissertation on adults' learning projects in 1965. However, the literature on principles that teachers may use to encourage, stimulate and support self-directed learning is limited. The emphasis has been placed on the more theoretical, conceptual and research methodological topics to the exclusion of practice (Long & Agyekum, 1989).

The treatment of the research by Gibbons and his colleagues (1980) illustrates the point. Let us briefly consider this matter.

USAGE IN THE LITERATURE

A computer search was conducted to identify articles or books, published since 1980, on adult self-directed learning that cited or referred to Gibbons, et al. In addition to the identified works other published research dealing with adult self-directed learning were examined. A total of seventeen items were identified and reviewed to determine exactly how Gibbons' research informed the content of the identified works.

Nine of the sources identified (Brookfield, 1984, 1985b, 1986; Hiemstra, Essman and Palumbo, 1988; Houle, 1984; Jarvis, 1983; Knowles, 1980; Long, 1983; and Smith, 1982) failed to include a reference to Gibbons, et al. As the book written by Knowles was published in 1980 it was probably at the printers well before the Gibbons article was published. Also Jarvis, Long and Smith's works were well underway if not also already in manuscript stage. Thus, five of the nine authors had some realistic opportunity to refer to Gibbons' research. As one of Brookfield's (1985b) publications was concerned with application it is surprising that Gibbons' study was ignored in that place.

Eight articles and books containing references to Gibbons, et al. were identified and reviewed (Boyd and Fales, 1983; Brockett, 1985a, Brockett, 1985b, Brockett, 1985c;, Brockett, Hiemstra and Penland, 1982; Brookfield, 1985a Caffarella and O'Donnell, 1987, 1988). It is clear that only a few different authors are involved in the above publications.

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Brockett was author or co-author of three items and Caffarella and O'Donnell authored two of the works.

The nature of the references to Gibbons, et al. as reported in the above works is surprisingly similar. The comments about the Gibbons research are limited, with one exception, to the research methodology. The references by Caffarella and O'Donnell are identical in their two publications, hence nothing new about Gibbons work was contributed from one publication to another. Brockett has made most frequent reference to Gibbons, et al. In his two independently authored articles he restricts his comments to research methodology and personal characteristics associated with self-directed learning. The article co-authored by Brockett, Hiemstra and Penland (1982) contains the only identified direct reference to the results, e.g. principles, of Gibbons' work. They note the following:

> From this initial study, Gibbons, et al. laid a foundation of principles that might contribute to a theory of self-directed learning. They suggest, in part, that self-education can help individuals assume control for their learning, undertake learning for specific use in the present, promote personal integrity, and develop expertise in an area while remaining open to exploring many fields of activity. (1982, p. 174)

The eight articles identified and reviewed provide no criticism of the principles recommended by Gibbons' et al., make no suggestions for testing them or for ways of applying them. They also fail to attempt to relate them to any kind of theoretical framework. The lack of attention shown to the fourteen principles is shocking when one reviews the comments by Brookfield (1986) and others concerning the limited knowledge that adult educators have about how to develop or stimulate adult self-directed learning behavior.

Given the above conditions. Let us purpose to correct the oversight now. The next part of this paper (a) provides a listing of the fourteen principles and (b) examines three of them. Time and space will not allow us to examine others, however, it appears that a general impression of the principles is provided by the review of the first three principles.

PRINCIPLES

Following the presentation of their findings Gibbons, et al. provided a list of 14 "principles" of self-education. The principles are listed below:

1. In self-education the locus of control is in the self-educator whereas in formal education the locus of control is in institutions, their representatives, or their prescriptions. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to internalize control over their own learning.

2. Self-education is usually a concentrated effort in one field rather than a general study of many. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to identify and become expert at the activity or activities that may become central in their lives.

3. Self-education is usually applied education--learning for immediate application to a task, and from the practical experience involved in executing it. Teaching for self-education involves integrating theoretical studies with technical training and practical application. It means learning for specific use now rather than learning for possible use years later.

4. Self-educators are self-motivated, that is, they are committed to achievement in the field of their choice, even when faced with difficulties. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to generate their own drive toward their own goals rather than stimulating them to pursue goals set for them by others.

5. Self-education is usually guided by a vision of accomplishment, recognition or rewards valued highly by the individual. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to see themselves successfully experiencing very desirable attainments. It involves learning to plan an effective way of making that vision a reality.

6. Self-educators tend to settle on the particular field in which their interest, talents, past experiences, and opportunities are combined. Teaching for self-education involves patterns of exploration which enable students to try out a wide range of fields of activity.

7. Self-educators tend to settle on the unique pattern of formal, informal and casual methods by which they learn best--drawing from such possibilities as study, observation, experience, courses, training, conversation, practice, trial and error, apprenticeship, productive activity, group interaction, events, and projects. Teaching involves helping each student to develop a personal learning style.

8. Self-education involves the development of attributes traditionally associated with people of character: integrity, self-discipline, perseverance,

industriousness, altruism, sensitivity to others, and strong guiding principles. Teaching for self-education should promote, model, and reward the development of personal integrity rather than the opportunistic pursuit of offered rewards, of self-discipline rather than obedience, of inner drive rather than the avoidance of punishment or the pursuit of artificial rewards, of caring rather than sustained competition and of strong internalized principles rather than externally imposed rules.

9. Self-education involves the development of attributes usually associated with self-directed and unique, even radical people: drive, independence of thought, nonconformity, originality, and talent. Teaching for self-education involves promoting drive rather than passivity, independence rather than dependence, originality rather than conformity, and the talents that make individuals unique rather than the tasks that make them all act the same.

10. Self-educators use reading and other process skills to gain access to the information and guidance they need for their projects. Teaching for self-education involves training in the process skills, such as reading and remembering, especially at the moment students urgently need to gain access to information.

11. Self-education emerges as a theme that runs through a number of important experiences in the person's youth; later experiences maintain and develop the theme until it becomes a conscious focus of choices in the person's life. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to identify themes emerging in their lives, to build on those they choose, and to create new themes they desire.

12. Self-eduction is best cultivated in a warm, supportive, coherent environment in which people generally are active and there is a close relationship with at least one other person. Teaching for self-education involves creating an active environment in which a student's self-directed activities are warmly supported and there are many opportunities to form close working relationship.

13. Self-educated people seem to like others and to be liked or admired by them; they seem to be healthy in attitude, body, and mind. Teaching for self-education involves promoting a holistic approach to learning so that students not only master some knowledge or skill, but they also develop a healthy attitude toward themselves, others, the world and their activities.

> 14. In addition to cultivating expertise, the characteristics described above outline a process of education suitable for the development of a mature personality, for achieving self-actualization and for the process of learning. Teaching for self-education involves helping each student to become an expert, a participant, and a person. (Gibbons, et al. 1980, p. 52-55)

SELECTED PRINCIPLES

Gibbons first four principles are analyzed in the following paragraphs. The initial major criticism of the principles is noted here. It appears that the researchers made no attempt to distinguish between principles and strategies. In reality each of Gibbons' principles seem to consist of two parts: the principle and a strategy. In the published work the two parts are distinguished by regular type and italics. In the following analysis we make a formal distinction between the two parts and identify them accordingly.

The following procedures were used in the analysis. First, each of the three principles and strategies were examined to determine (a) their instructive value, e.g. are they overly broad and general, or are they too narrow and specific? and (b) what kinds of hypotheses flow from the principles or strategy statement?

Principle 1

In self-education the locus of control is in the self-educator, whereas, in formal education the locus of control is in institutions, their representatives, or their prescription.

The principle as stated is somewhat unwieldy. In reality two principles are presented. The first clause in the complex sentence states that the locus of control is in the self-educator. The second notes that in formal education the locus of control is in the institution, etc. If we take the sentence clauses independently we have a more workable analytical framework.

Problems with both clauses emerge from the definition of locus of control. Is control an all or nothing phenomena? or are there degrees of control? Secondly, formal education as represented in the principle is also an all or nothing situation, e.g., total control is indicated.

In essence it appears that the principle is overly complex and too broadly stated.

Strategy 1

Teaching for self-education involves helping students to internalize control over their own learning.

The strategy given is partly consistent with the principle. It is only partly consistent because of the implication in the principle that the locus of control in formal education is in the institution. If we accept the caveat noted previously that locus of control may be partial or exist in shared amount by the learner and the institution, then the strategy loses some of its contradictory character.

Yet, the strategy, as expressed may have limited value to the teacher who wishes to "help learners internalize control over their own learning". Greater specificity of how and why the strategy may be applied is required before we can move this strategy to the level of a tactic or technique. The literature on self-theory (Purkey, 1970) may be informative, e.g. it is suggested that success in one area of self is often generalized to other areas. Accordingly, we might search for a tactic that would enhance the learner's self-concept. More specifically, we might try to develop an activity that strengthens one's self-concept as a responsible learner.

Tactics

To be developed in workshop session.

Principle 2

Self-education is usually a concentrated effort in one field rather than a general study of many. Teaching for self-education involves helping students to identify and become expert at the activity or activities that may become central in their lives.

Strategy 2

Teaching for self-education involves helping students to identify and become expert at the activity or activities that may become central in their lives.

The above strategy is consistent with the principle. Yet, even if the philosophical issues are ignored, implementation of the strategy is less than direct and clear. How does a teacher help students to identify activities that may become central in their lives? The strategy as stated suggests that such activities are "programmed into the learner's genes and that teachers' roles are like that of a miner. Somehow, the idea of developing interests and even picking and choosing among many interest is implied as being less than desirable, yet this idea is encouraged in principles six and eleven. Suggestions from the intrinsic motivation literature may be

helpful in arriving at tactics related to this strategy (Long, 1989). Accordingly, the tactic should be designed to accomplish one of two ends: (a) to relate to a commitment the individual has already made and/or (b) to introduce some incongruent information into the learner's cognitive structure.

Tactics

To be developed in workshop session.

Principle 3

Self-education is usually applied education-learning for immediate application to a tasks, and from the practical experience in executing it.

Once again the principle is too complex for easy use. It could be simplified as follows:

1. Self-education is applied education

2. Self-education is enhanced or motivated by immediate application.

3. Self-education benefits from the practical experience in executing the learning.

Broken down into the above simple statement we have three principles that may help us to target our practice and research once we define the terms. Terms that need to be defined for both application and research as follows:

Self-education

Applied education

Immediate application

Practical experience

Executing learning

Strategy 3

Teaching for self-education involves integrating theoretical studies with technical training and practical application. It means learning for specific use now rather than learning for possible use years later. Both self-theory and intrinsic motivation theory may be instructive in developing tactics consistent with strategy three. Self-concept theory suggests that each learner's self-concept may influence their belief system which in turn suggests that the view of what is

practical may vary according to individuals. Secondly, what is practical and what has application may have a range of ends.

Problems to be solved now can be related to learners' self concepts and cognitive structure. Some students may be stimulated to resolve a paradox because it exists. Others may ignore the same paradox because they do not believe it to be important. Tactics may include long-term application goals or short term objectives. Games and simulations are examples.

Tactics

Tactics to be developed in workshop session.

Principle 4

The principle as stated appears to fail to fully communicate the strength of self-motivation implied in the principle, otherwise it would be adequate to merely express the principle as "self-educators are self motivated". It appears Gibbons and his colleagues really wished to communicate the fact that self-motivation would be sufficiently strong to overcome obstacles.

Strategy 4

Teaching for self-education involves helping students to generate their own drive toward their goals rather than stimulating them to pursue goals set for them by others.

The strategy reflects the importance of self-motivation, or intrinsic motivation as it is sometimes called (Long, 1989). It also recalls the strategy of locus of control reported in Gibbons' first principle. Yet, the strategy, as does the previous three, fails to provide much concrete or specific help to the educator. Tactics that might be employed by the educator are suggested in the work of Csikszentimihalyi (1975) in his description of the relationship between play and intrinsic rewards. Accordingly the tactics used by the educator should facilitate (a) concentration on a limited stimulus field, (b) to meet clear demands, (c) that generate or contribute to a feeling of control over the environment, e.g. mastery of a limited but important area.

Tactics

To be developed in workshop session.

Given the above discussion of the first four principles emerging from Gibbons, et al. (1980) let us attempt to develop some tactics consistent with the strategies.

Will you please volunteer for a group to work on tactics for principle 1? principle 2? principle 3? principle 4?

Form group according to volunteers.

Instructions: After you have formed your groups you will have fifteen minutes to develop one or more tactics for implementing the selected principle and strategy. Each group will devise some procedure to make a report at the end of the fifteen minute session.

CONCLUSIONS

This session has been an applied activity wherein we have noted the fourteen principles in "teaching for self-education" reported by Gibbons' et al (1980). We specifically selected the first four of their fourteen principles to illustrate some of the challenge involved in applying the principles to classroom learning.

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